

## Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening



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### CEPPS Quarterly Report: 1 October 2011 – 31 December 2011

#### Iraq: Elections Support Project

USAID Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 267-LA-11-00001, under the Leader Cooperative Agreement No. DFD-A-00-08-00350-00

Project Dates: 1 October 2011 – 31 September 2014

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This cover memorandum accompanies the detailed reports submitted by IFES, of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the program: Iraq Elections Support Project

#### I. POLITICAL CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

The political context in which IFES has operated during this reporting period had two significant developments. These developments were the passing of the Kurdistan Election Law amendments and the opening of the nomination process for new members of the IHEC's Board of Commissioners (BoC).

In December, Kurdistan's President, Massoud Barzani, signed the region's election law amendment. It contains a number of key provisions that will dictate Kurdistan's governorate

councils, districts, and sub-districts elections. The Kurdistan elections are scheduled to occur on 27 September 2012.

The other development, which was ongoing throughout the quarter, was the nomination process for replacement members of the IHEC Board of Commissioners (BoC). Nearly 7,500 people applied for membership on the board. A Committee of Experts (CoE) is vetting the applicants for legal eligibility and once a shortlist is established, new members will be selected. At the time of reporting, the review of the remaining applications for the IHEC BoC was delayed, due to CoE absences related to the postponement of parliamentary sessions through mid-January.

These developments directly influence IFES activities. IFES expects to be involved in providing technical expertise to both the IHEC National Office (NO) and Kurdistan Regional Electoral Office (KREO), along with governorate electoral offices (GEO) throughout the Kurdistan region, as preparations for elections continues. Additionally, with a new BoC set to assume their roles in April 2012, IFES is preparing several briefings and trainings in order to facilitate a seamless leadership transition within the IHEC.

The current political and security context presents several challenges to IFES programming. The first one is visa issuance process and its lengthy and constantly changing nature. The second political and security challenge is the security situation in Iraq after the U.S. troops withdrawal, particularly the security situation in the International Zone (IZ), where IFES staff resides and intends to reside.

During this quarter, IFES initiated the non-governmental organization (NGO) registration process with the GoI. Becoming a fully-registered NGO will help to ensure that IFES staff and consultants will get the necessary visas and permits to work in Iraq, one of the critical assumptions underlying this project.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

The program responds to the primary objective established by USAID, which is that independent electoral management, as a long-term political process reform strategy, is strengthened. IFES' specific objectives for this program are as follows:

- 1. IHEC's strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluation capacity is strengthened** - IFES will assist the IHEC to improve its strategic planning process, develop coherent and viable strategic and operational plans, and monitor and evaluate the implementation of these plans. Expected results include development of strategic and operational plans and vision and mission statements; conduct of internal and external assessments; creation of a monitoring and evaluation strategy for strategic and annual plans; and development of a training course for Commissioners.
- 2. IHEC's internal management processes and systems are strengthened** - IFES will focus on basic managerial and administrative skills that were previously neglected, including development of skills in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), database systems,

finance and accounting, communications, crisis management and contingency planning, budget preparation and execution. Key results include: development of ICT systems; increased capacity in database/software, finance, accounting, and budgeting procedures; conduct of a voter registry audit; development of an operational plan for voter registration; development of a communications strategy; and development of training courses on finance, preparation of budgets, and technical election topics, including electoral fraud.

- 3. IHEC capacity to manage external affairs with key electoral stakeholders is improved** - IFES will expose the IHEC to international best practices, stakeholder consultations and a review of current perceptions regarding the IHEC in order to assist in development of the IHEC's media relations strategy and communication plans. IFES will also work with the IHEC to provide training in the design and implementation of official voter information and education programs which will be implemented in partnership with local CSOs. Expected results include development and implementation of a survey on perceptions regarding the IHEC; development of a media strategy; capacity building on voter education; a subgrants program on voter education; development of voter education materials; and development of mechanisms for stakeholder consultations.

### **III. ACTIVITIES**

IFES' programming in this reporting period corresponds with activities outlined in the project proposal and Project Implementation Plan (PIP). Activities fell under the following areas:

#### **Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened**

##### ***1.1.1 Induction workshop on strategic planning for senior IHEC staff and establishment of IHEC strategic planning bodies***

IFES advisors held several discussions with IHEC staff to lay the foundation for a successful strategic planning process. The discussions touched on the types of assistance IFES could offer as the IHEC prepares its new Strategic Plan, which will outline activities between 2012 and 2017. Furthermore, IFES recruited a consultant to produce a preliminary assessment tool in order for both IFES and the IHEC to acquire a sharp view of current IHEC capacities.

##### ***1.1.3 Conduct of internal and external organizational assessments***

IFES' Organizational Management Specialist, along with Directors of several IHEC departments, have started information gathering, including the development and distribution of self-assessments for both IHEC management and staff. The assessments are scheduled for distribution in early January 2012.

#### **Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened**

##### ***2.1 Support to the IHEC's IT Systems and Infrastructure***

In November and December, IFES staff worked hand-in-hand with the IHEC's IT Director to produce a comprehensive assessment of the information infrastructure. While a number of issues were found, recommendations were also produced to address the shortcomings. Some recommendations have already been acted upon and IFES advisors will work closely with their IHEC counterparts to follow-up on outstanding issues.

## ***2.2 Capacity building support to IHEC's Database and Software Developers and Staff***

In December, IFES Database/IT Management Specialist arrived in Amman, Jordan to begin a two-week mission to monitor the SQL-Server training being delivered to IHEC technical staff. The training was facilitated by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). The main purpose of the assignment was to assess the training process and to report on progress, issues, and recommendations. The full report of this training will be ready early next quarter.

### ***2.3.2 Support operational planning for voter registration activities***

With the passage of the Kurdistan Election Law amendment and the subsequent announcement that Kurdistan Governorate Council Elections (GCE) will be held on 27 September 2012, IFES was present to offer expertise to the operations process. In mid-November, IFES advisors met with the Kurdistan Region Electoral Office (KREO) Director to discuss the development of the amendments and the regional office preparation process. IFES' Deputy Chief of Party held a meeting with the IHEC's Director of Operations in mid-December to also discuss IFES' role in voter registration. Both parties agreed that IFES will provide a voter registration advisor, beginning early next quarter, to assist the KREO in the registration process.

## ***2.5 Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the introduction of financial controls, accounting, and finance systems***

In November, IFES organized a workshop in Erbil for the IHEC Finance Department to train its personnel on assets management using Ledger 13, which is a Government of Iraq provision standardizing inventory controls throughout the government. IFES advisors who attended the workshop expect that the procedures taught to the participants provided useful foundational knowledge that IFES can utilize when carrying out job specific training courses for the IHEC staff.

## ***2.8 Implementation of a comprehensive electoral training curriculum based on the BRIDGE curriculum***

IFES held two BRIDGE workshops for the IHEC Commissioners, Directors of Departments, and GEO managers in December 2011 in Erbil. The workshops were facilitated by IFES' Chief of Party, Senior Elections Operations Advisor, Program Manager, and an external BRIDGE consultant. A total of 41 Commissioners and Directors attended, 5 of who were women.

### **Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key External Stakeholders is Improved**

#### ***3.1 Training on the development of survey instruments and focus groups as part of public outreach programs***

In mid-November, IFES hosted a pair of introductory seminars on survey use for the IHEC's Public Outreach Division (POD) and the Capacity Building Department (CBD). The course provided fundamental information on survey techniques. IFES is considering other seminar topics in the months to come. These include: designing survey questionnaires; utilizing surveys conducted by other organizations; carrying out a survey within the IHEC; and, how to identify reputable survey firms. These topics will help the IHEC understand the utility of surveys and how they can be leveraged to improve public perception of the institution.

#### **IV. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE INDICATORS**

The Performance Management Plan (PMP) for the Elections Support Project is currently being reviewed by USAID (a revised version was submitted to USAID on January 23, 2012). IFES expects it to be approved early in the next quarter and will include indicator metrics for Q1FY12 in the next quarterly report.

#### **V. EVALUATION**

Despite administrative challenges listed above, IFES programming in this quarter was largely achieved. IFES endeavored to lay the groundwork required for the next three years of programming. In working with the IHEC to outline the forthcoming strategic planning process, initiating ICT assessments, introducing survey techniques, and launching the BRIDGE training, IFES advisors delivered effective programming pursuant to each of the project's three objectives.

In the months to come, IFES will build on this successful quarter of programming and will deal with the aforementioned challenges as proactively as possible. IFES is currently exploring legal counsel options in order to further facilitate the registration process. IFES expects that once fully registered, visa issuance will become less of an issue for advisors and consultants.

Other challenges will be more persistent. Mainstreaming gender equality within the IHEC has been a priority of IFES since the organization first started operations in Iraq in 2004. However, IFES has noted that, among IHEC staff, men greatly outnumber women. This is particularly true at the Director-level and above.

#### **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

In addition to its daily, on-the-job training activities, IFES will facilitate the a series of 5 workshops in Erbil in FY12Q2 (please see Table 3 below).

## CEPPS/IFES QUARTERLY REPORT: 1 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 2011

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### I. SUMMARY

#### *Project Start-Up*

As part of the CEPPS consortium, IFES was awarded a cooperative agreement for implementation of the *Elections Support Project (ESP)*, which started on 1 October 2011. The project provides technical assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC) and responds to the primary objective established by USAID, which is that independent electoral management, as a long-term political process reform strategy, is strengthened. The program also builds upon IFES' previous program experience in Iraq, under Cooperative Agreement 267-A-00-04-00405-00, its technical leadership in the field of election administration support, and its continuing relationship with Iraq's election management body, the IHEC, which serves as its primary partner in all aspects of the project.

IFES' efforts during this quarter partially focused on staffing the new project. A Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) was successfully recruited, and a number of local national employees were also hired. Additionally, expert consultants were recruited for deployment later in the project. The recruitment process continued throughout the fall, with IFES bringing aboard an Organizational Management Specialist in December 2011. While the local national positions were nearly fully filled by the close of the reporting period, efforts remain underway to fill two remaining expatriate positions: the External Relations Specialist and the Finance, Grants, and Procurement Officer. Other staffing changes included the resignation of IFES Chief of Party, Hermann Thiel, at the end of this reporting period. Mr. Thiel's work was instrumental in getting the programmatic aspects of the project up and running during the past quarter. A new Chief of Party has been identified and is expected to assume the role in spring 2012.

At the end of this reporting period, IFES initiated the non-governmental organization (NGO) registration process with the Government of Iraq (GoI). Becoming a fully-registered NGO will also help to ensure that IFES staff and consultants will get the necessary visas and permits to work in Iraq, one of the critical assumptions underlying this project. The challenge posed by this process is its slow pace, which can take between five and six months. Nevertheless, once completed, all activities falling under the scope of this program will be in accordance with the Iraqi regulations governing foreign NGOs.

#### *Challenges*

During this first quarter of operation of the project, IFES experienced challenges related to visa issuance, which continues to hinder efficient deployment of IFES staff and consultants. At the end of IFES' previous Cooperative Agreement with USAID (#267-A-00-04-00405-00), two IFES filed staffers—Sherif Shaker (Senior Elections Operations Advisor) and Sayed Mustafa Aghazadah

(Database/IT Management Specialist)—left Iraq after their visas were cancelled by IFES’ security provider-GardaWorld. Mr. Shaker received a visa shortly thereafter and was able to return to the field, but Mr. Aghazadah did not receive a visa to return during this reporting period. At the end of this reporting period, the Government of Iraq (GoI) has been slow to issue visas to foreigners. Furthermore, when issued, these visas are valid for only a month at a time. While extensions can be requested, this places a significant administrative burden on IFES. What is more, there is considerable ambiguity over when the visa process will be streamlined and how many times month-long visa can be extended.

Another challenge is the security situation in Iraq after the U.S. troops withdrawal, particularly the security situation in the International Zone (IZ), where IFES staff resides and intends to reside. During this quarter, IFES was evicted from the villa it resided in within the IZ on the basis of new regulations that any international organization wishing to reside in the IZ have to obtain permission from the Prime Minister’s Office. After IFES’ eviction from the villa, IFES staff was temporarily housed in the Unity Resources Group’s (URG) villa—IFES’ security and life-support provider—but left those premises as well shortly thereafter as that villa was put on eviction notice as well. Subsequently, IFES staff moved to the GSI Executive Suites, also known as DOJO’s, which is located in the IZ. Upon consideration of: the limited available options for housing in the IZ, the options put forth by URG, as well as the current regulatory framework for residency in the IZ (as well as for registration as an NGO in Iraq), IFES decided to pursue the option of remaining at DOJO’s and thus settle on this location as its long-term residence.

### *Programmatic Work*

In regards to its programmatic work, IFES and the IHEC held several planning meetings in October and November to discuss upcoming activities. These meetings explored topics such as strategic planning, the eventual transition of a new Board of Commissioners (BoC), and the scope and timing of future workshops. As a whole, these meetings provided IFES with substantive input from the IHEC in order to produce the former’s first yearly program implementation plan (PIP), which was submitted to USAID on 1 November 2011, along with establishing the timeline for FY2012 activities. Both documents were formally approved on 10 January 2012.

IFES’ also produced a first draft of the Performance Management Plan (PMP) and a sub-grants manual. The PMP was officially submitted to USAID on 9 November. IFES has received comments from USAID, and is currently in the process of finalizing the revised document. IFES also developed and submitted to USAID, a sub-grants manual that will be instrumental in the administration of the small sub-grants program.

Furthermore, IFES facilitated two one-day workshops in Baghdad and three workshops in Erbil. One took place in November and two occurred in December (see Table 2). November’s workshop, which provided instruction on inventory protocols, was notable in that IFES utilized an Iraqi consultant, thereby ensuring that local expertise and knowledge is utilized wherever possible and appropriate. In December, IFES hosted two well-received Building Resources in Democracy and Governance (BRIDGE) workshops for the IHEC Commissioners and Governorate Electorate Office

(GEO) directors. BRIDGE training is an integral part of the current project, and IFES envisions facilitating accreditation for enough IHEC personnel so that the curriculum can be taught autonomously, without international support.

In addition to facilitating workshops, IFES staff also spent a considerable amount of time discussing the IHEC's strategic planning process, which will be supported by IFES. A consultant was contracted to produce a preliminary assessment of the current IHEC capabilities, as well as new avenues for capacity building. This assessment is merely IFES' initial step towards its first objective—strengthening the IHEC's strategic planning process—but it was invaluable in showing how IFES can assist the various departments in developing coherent and viable strategic and operational plans that can be tied together and utilized to reach organizational-level goals.

The first quarter of 2012 proved to be an intensive period as IFES transitioned to a new project. Advisors expended considerable efforts to position IFES within the IHEC to achieve its objectives in the next three years of programming. However, despite these challenges, IFES ended the reporting period with a clear programmatic focus for the remaining quarters of FY2012, and momentum continues to build for successful project implementation.

## **II. POLITICAL CONTEXT**

The impending withdrawal of American troops from Iraq permeated political discussions throughout the country during this reporting period. While Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki claims that Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) can protect the country from internal and external threats post-U.S. withdrawal, sporadic violence continues to plague the capital and the countryside, leading others to claim that widespread violence may return.

Elsewhere, discussions on the U.S. withdrawal have been punctuated by violence between various political factions, which continue to hinder Iraq's reconciliation process. In late December, al Maliki issued an arrest warrant for Vice President Tariq al Hashimi, a member of the mainly Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc, on terrorism charges. At the time of reporting, Mr. al Hashimi had fled to Kurdistan to avoid arrest, where he currently remains. Additionally, Mr. al Maliki asked the Iraqi Parliament for a vote of no confidence in Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al Mutlaq, who is also a member of the Iraqiya political party, for incompetence. The Iraqiya bloc officially announced they were boycotting Parliament in a demonstration against al Maliki's concentration of power. Also, in a number of Sunni-dominated governorates, efforts to declare autonomous regions have gained momentum, raising questions about the efficacy of the centralized government.

While these developments continue to play out, a number of electoral issues also arose. The two issues most salient to the IHEC were the passing of the Kurdistan Election Law amendments and the opening of the nomination process for new members of the IHEC's Board of Commissioners (BoC).



On 12 December, Kurdistan's President, Massoud Barzani, signed the region's election law amendment. It contains a number of key provisions that will dictate Kurdistan's governorate councils, districts, and sub-districts elections. Among these provisions are: use of a limited open list, in which a voter has the right to vote for a list and one candidate, or to vote for a list only (a proportional representation system will be adopted); establishment of 30% quota for female candidates in electoral districts; institution of a polling process separate from the general election to allow special needs voters, such as military or hospitalized voters, to participate ; and, establishment of an election date by the Prime Minister's council, which will be announced with 90-days notice before election day.

The Kurdistan elections will take place on 27 September 2012 and IFES will play an important role in its preparation and execution. Specifically, IFES will endeavor to provide voter registration update assistance, including testing voter registration software and creating provisional voter lists. Additionally, IFES will advise the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) on establishing and utilizing a new data entry center in Erbil. IFES assistance to the KRG is ongoing and will be covered in future reports.

In Baghdad, the nomination process for replacement BoC members also opened during this reporting period. At the time of writing, nearly 7,500 people have submitted applications for the seven new commissioner positions. The new prospective commissioners are being vetted by a Committee of Experts (CoE), a process that some observers claim to be lacking in transparency. The special committee assesses applicants in lots of 1,000 where legal eligibility is established and shortlists of eligible candidates are produced. The committee will then move ahead with selecting new commissioners.

At the time of reporting, the review of the remaining applications for the IHEC BoC was delayed, due to CoE absences related to the postponement of parliamentary sessions through mid-January. As this report was being produced, representatives of five leading civil society organizations were able to attend the session of the Committee of Experts after receiving a briefing from the CoE Chairman. Active public monitoring of the CoE activities has been a UN recommendation right from the start of the process, along with open reporting on the selection process.

IFES advisors remain in continuous dialogue with the IHEC Commissioners about the nomination process. However, while the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been providing formal input into the process, IFES has chosen to remain at arm's length from the process due to the politically charged atmosphere surrounding it. Once the new BoC is selected later in 2012, IFES will be ready to provide tailored briefings and training courses to help facilitate the new BoC members into their posts.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### **Objective 1: IHEC's Strategic Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Capacity is Strengthened**

##### ***1.1.1 Induction workshop on strategic planning for senior IHEC staff and establishment of IHEC strategic planning bodies***

IFES advisors, along with their IHEC counterparts, met a number of times this quarter to discuss the strategic planning process that the IHEC will undertake in 2012. Although these discussions were preliminary in nature, they did give IFES an opportunity to present to the IHEC BoC the broad strokes of the strategic planning assistance that is available.

In advance of the strategic planning workshop, a consultant has been recruited in order to facilitate the development of an assessment methodology for conducting internal operation assessments; guide the conduct of internal and external assessments; assist in formulating a timeline for the strategic planning process, the framework for the Strategic Plan, and organizational surveys; and conduct strategic planning workshops for the Commissioners and senior staff of the IHEC. This consultant spent two weeks in Baghdad in October 2011.

It is unlikely that the induction workshop will take place until the new Board is in place. IFES wants broad buy-in from the new BoC. Moving too far into the strategic planning process too early may run the risk of alienating the ideas of the incoming Commissioners, who are slated to be inducted in April 2012. For now, IFES is focusing on looking at the organization as a whole, putting assessment methodologies into place, and reviewing the abilities of the rank-and-file IHEC personnel.

##### ***1.1.3 Conduct of internal and external organizational assessments***

IFES' Organizational Management Specialist, along with Directors of several IHEC departments, have started information gathering, including the development and distribution of self-assessments for both IHEC management and staff. These assessments require management from each department to assess 21 predetermined areas on a scale of 1 to 5, or not applicable (N/A), with 1 being the least problematic, and 5 being extremely problematic. Each topic has a comments box for further elaboration. Some of the self-assessment questions that were produced include: personnel ability to maintain consistent workflow; adequacy of staff training systems; employee turnover; standard operating procedures; and, employee attendance. The assessments are scheduled for distribution in early January 2012.

These scores will help to establish the skillset baseline that IFES staff and consultants will use to judge IHEC technical and vocational capacity. This information will also be used during the forthcoming Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which will be carried out by IFES' Strategic Planning Consultant, in order to help determine how the IHEC can enhance the capacity of its staff. Finally, this information will then be fed into the IHEC's own strategic planning process so that organizational shortcomings can be rectified.

## **Objective 2: IHEC's Internal Management Processes and Systems are Strengthened**

### ***2.1 Support to the IHEC's IT Systems and Infrastructure***

IFES support to the IHEC's IT systems and infrastructure is designed to help the IHEC IT staff manage and maintain the operations of a Microsoft-based information infrastructure. IFES advisors work with the IHEC IT staff to ensure the system meets the needs of the IHEC and functions without major breakdowns.

In November and December, IFES staff worked hand-in-hand with the IHEC's IT Director to produce a comprehensive assessment of the information infrastructure. While a number of issues were found, recommendations were also produced to address the shortcomings.

The following issues were uncovered during the assessment:

- A number of servers are currently non-operational. One of the servers is the E-mail Exchange server; IT staff shut it down after they lost access to the internet. Additionally, the domain name registration was never renewed so it is possibly lost.
- The network infrastructure should have three different networks (VLANs), but there are continuous problems with each of the configurations. There are also several Cisco switches connected as a stack, but the stack configuration process was problematic. A temporary fix was put into place, but, unfortunately, it resulted in reduced network performance.
- The main Internet modems are non-operational and the IHEC did not renew the Internet service subscription. A back-up service is currently in use, but is very slow and not accessible to everyone.
- There is no standard backup protocol being carried out on the running servers. Some backup tapes exist, but all of them are down. Additionally, the shared data on the file server is not subject to backup. All shared data will be lost if there are serious problems.

With these issues in mind, IFES' Technical Program Associate put forth the following recommendations:

- The email exchange server must be resurrected, even if the IHEC does not have Internet access. This server will help people exchange information electronically, instead of relying on thumb drives, a process that enables viruses to spread easily from one computer to another.
- A fully licensed anti-virus software program and a server for distributing updates must be installed and configured on the network. All clients need to be connected to this anti-virus server so they may pull up security updates on a regular basis.
- A backup system should be installed or developed. Alternatively, the Windows backup procedure can be used to backup the shared data on the server. Back-up tapes should be restored and used wherever possible, as well.

- To improve overall network performance, the following suggestions are offered:
  - Network packet sniffing software that allows the Admin IT to monitor network traffic, which will help find abusers and virus-infected machines on the network, should be installed;
  - Windows Server Update Services (WSUS) enables administrators to manage updates for Microsoft products to computers in a corporate environment. This system will help guarantee that all computers on the network are running the latest Microsoft update patches;
  - Network monitoring tools should be installed in order for systems managers to be notified when any device goes down. This will help track any problems on the network, with the goal of leading to quicker resolutions.

Some recommendations have already been acted upon. The IHEC IT Section is currently developing a plan to upgrade their current network servers. The Section expects to receive three new servers with advanced technical specifications early next quarter. The server will replace the current troublesome network domain and exchange servers with more advanced alternatives.

IFES will continue to work closely with the IHEC in order to implement the remaining recommendations in order to restore full functionality to the IHEC's IT infrastructure.

## ***2.2 Capacity building support to IHEC's Database and Software Developers and Staff***

Throughout the quarter, IHEC database developers attended an ongoing series of SQL-Server trainings facilitated by the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS) and Providence International in Amman, Jordan. These trainings were designed to bolster the IHEC's ability to create and troubleshoot sophisticated database architecture.



SQL-Server Training, Amman, Jordan (26 December 2011)

The SQL-Server course was divided into three sub-courses; Administration, Development, and Business Intelligence. The participants underwent pre-assessments to determine their levels of understanding so lectures could be adjusted accordingly. Each sub-course was followed by two exams; one from Microsoft's online certification portal and other from the training institute itself.

With the new skills and knowledge gained in training, the IHEC personnel should be able to gradually take over IT initiatives in the foreseeable future. For example, they have mastered almost all the tools required to develop application software using the MS .Net platform.

On 21 December 2011, the IFES Database/IT Management Specialist arrived in Amman, Jordan to begin a two-week mission to monitor the SQL-Server training being delivered to IHEC technical staff. The main purpose of the assignment was to assess the training process and to report on progress, issues, and recommendations.

In order to produce this report, the Database/IT Management Specialist relied on an informal interview methodology to assess the impact the training is having on IHEC capacity. He met with trainees and trainers, along with management personnel from the training institute, in order to gauge how the trainings were progressing and the effect they were having. The IFES advisor also sat in on lectures and training sessions. The full report of this training will be ready early next quarter.

IFES will work to ensure that the skills acquired by the IHEC staff at these trainings will be put into practice as soon as possible. To that end, a number of potential IFES-facilitated workshops, taking place as ongoing events at the National Office, are envisioned (see Table 1).

These workshops will complement and build on the SQL-Server trainings. They will help ensure that the IHEC can gradually assume responsibility for the development and maintenance of the databases required by electoral operations.

**Table 1: Potential IFES-facilitated database developer workshops, 2012**

No.	Workshop Title	Duration
1	Programming with VB.NET	12 Days
2	Web application with ASP.NET	8 Days
3	Working with ADO.NET	7 Days
4	HTML and CSS	3 Days
5	JavaScript	4 Days
6	Asynchronous JavaScript and XML (AJAX)	3 Days
7	Web services	2 Days
8	Practice - SQL Server	15 Days

### ***2.3.2 Support operational planning for voter registration activities***

As specified in the IFES Iraq's program implementation plan for the first year of activities, IFES will endeavor to support and advise the IHEC on planning for and implementing operational plans.

With the passage of the Kurdistan Election Law amendment and the subsequent announcement that Kurdistan Governorate Council Elections (GCE) will be held on 27 September 2012, IFES was present to offer expertise to the operations process. In mid-November, IFES advisors met with

the Kurdistan Region Electoral Office (KREO) Director to discuss the development of the amendments and the regional office preparation process.

During this meeting, IFES learned that the KREO recently moved to a new location in Erbil, with possible plans to establish a Data Entry Center (DEC) there. The building has roughly 600 square meters of space that could be used as a data entry center. However, extensive infrastructure work will be required before installing any networks or data entry terminals. IFES offered technical input and also advised the KREO to use the experience of the Data Entry Center staff at the National Office before reaching for external assistance. It remains to be seen if the center could be designed and built in Erbil before the Kurdistan voter registration update takes place (scheduled for May 2012) and, if this turns out to be the case, data entry could be done in Baghdad, while results tabulation for the Kurdistan GCE elections would take place in Erbil, with IFES contributing development assistance to the tabulation software.

IFES' Deputy Chief of Party held a meeting with the IHEC's Director of Operations in mid-December to also discuss IFES' role in voter registration. Both parties agreed that IFES will provide a voter registration advisor, beginning early next quarter, to assist the KREO in the registration process. The KREO expects there to be over 200 voter registration center throughout the region, with IFES assisting in their establishment. Furthermore, IFES has started looking at ways that it can assist with testing the voter registration software, which is roughly 85% complete, but, according to the IHEC staff, requires international assistance to finalize. IFES advisors will participate in testing and consultants will be brought in as necessary throughout the registration process.

More extensive operational assistance will be provided in the next quarter. IFES has already dispatched its Senior Elections Operations Advisor to Erbil to liaise with local counterparts there in early January, in preparation for the operational planning process moving into a more intensive phase.

### ***2.5 Support to the IHEC Directorates of Finance and Administration with the introduction of financial controls, accounting, and finance systems***

From 14-17 November, IFES organized a workshop in Erbil for the IHEC Finance Department to train its personnel on assets management using Ledger 13, which is a Government of Iraq provision standardizing inventory controls throughout the government.

The workshop included one staff member from each of the 19 governorates who is directly in charge of maintaining ledger 13 procedures. From the National Office, three staff members from the Finance Department, three from the Audit Department, and two from the Warehouse Section joined the training. A total of 30 participants, including 5 women attended the workshop.

The IHEC Finance Director and Controller led the workshop as the main facilitators. IFES also contracted a local expert specialized in government accounting processes and financial-cum-legal principals. Furthermore, an IFES representative served as the administrative facilitator for the workshop.

In preparation for the training, the facilitators developed several handouts and manuals for the workshop. Each participant received a Government Accounting Principles Handbook, a Ledger 13 Manual, and Warehousing Activities Forms.



The workshop offered lectures on the principles of government finance, which were tailored specifically to the IHEC's operating environment. There were also several hands-on exercises using the ledger format.

The training also included lectures on the concept of inventory and its valuation within the budget. The Director of Finance introduced the principles of warehouse intake and disbursement processes. The activities produced lively debate on discarding old inventory, as well as the selling and gifting of government assets.



Ledger 13 Workshop, Erbil, Iraq (16 November 2011)

The workshop achieved its objective of introducing the newly mandated inventory control methodology. The participants gained the following knowledge from the training:

- Identifying inventory and allocating it within the budget;
- New procurement methodology and cost disbursement;
- Documentation requirements for processing goods received;
- Receiving materials and the disposition process; and
- Annual and periodic inventory and records compilation;

More than 75% of the participants indicated the workshop achieved its objective. Also, over 90% of attendees indicated that the information they learned will help them progress in their jobs. IFES advisors who attended the workshop expect that the procedures taught to the participants provided useful foundational knowledge that IFES can utilize when carrying out job specific training courses for the IHEC staff (activity 2.5.2).

## ***2.8 Implementation of a comprehensive electoral training curriculum based on the BRIDGE curriculum***

In 2011, IFES and the IHEC engaged in a comprehensive BRIDGE program. During 2011, under the previous Cooperative Agreement with USAID, IFES trained 300 staff members in BRIDGE introduction modules during the course of 11 workshops. In addition, 16 staff members were fully accredited as BRIDGE facilitators. However, none of these workshops were tailored to the upper echelons of the IHEC's staff. To remedy that situation, during this past quarter IFES held two BRIDGE workshops for the IHEC Commissioners, Directors of Departments, and GEO managers in December 2011 in Erbil. The workshops were facilitated by IFES' Chief of Party, Senior Elections Operations Advisor, Program Manager, and an external BRIDGE consultant. A total of 41 Commissioners and Directors attended, 5 of whom were women.

Both workshops had the following objectives:

- Introduce the BRIDGE Curriculum and the BRIDGE methodology to the IHEC management;
- Discuss how the BRIDGE methodology can be used for future capacity building;
- Expose Directors to the material discussed during previous BRIDGE courses for their staff;
- Hold intensive discussions on international standards and best practices in elections management as well as concepts like transparency, integrity, and neutrality, and implications for future electoral management; and
- Create debate on electoral systems and electoral system design, focusing on experiences with electoral system reform in the Middle East and North Africa.

The workshop concluded with a discussion on the future use of the BRIDGE curriculum for the IHEC staff and Director-level involvement in implementing future BRIDGE activities.

The workshop was very well-received. The IHEC management staff who participated were impressed with the breadth of the BRIDGE curriculum. Several directors indicated their enthusiasm for further trainings specifically for the management. These workshops also helped IFES deepen its relationships with the IHEC leadership, which will facilitate future activities.

### **Objective 3: IHEC Capacity to Manage External Affairs with Key External Stakeholders is Improved**

#### ***3.1 Training on the development of survey instruments and focus groups as part of public outreach programs***

On 22 and 24 November, 2011 IFES hosted a pair of introductory seminars on survey use for the IHEC's Public Outreach Division (POD) and the Capacity Building Department (CBD). The objective of the course was to provide fundamental information on the following components of survey techniques: what surveys are and what they are not; how surveys work; and, the utility of surveys as they relate to the activities of the departments and the IHEC as a whole.



The event was facilitated by the IFES Chief of Party and Project Manager. The first workshop hosted 18 POD staff members, including 6 women. The second workshop included 16 Capacity Building Division (CBD) members, including 4 women. Program materials included an Arabic language handout, which provided an overview of survey methodologies, along with an IFES-prepared, Arabic language PowerPoint presentation.

The facilitators started each session by gathering comments from the participants in order to present an accurate and generally accepted definition of survey. There were brief discussions on what surveys consist of and how they differ from referenda.

Each workshop then presented the concept of public opinion surveys. Utilizing hypothetical and historical examples of public opinion polls, the groups were able to move into a discussion on determining appropriate survey sizes depending on a given population. From there, the IHEC staff was pressed to identify possible obstacles in trying to collect public opinions. The workshops used this time to present the concepts of survey methods and how surveys need to be designed in order to collect the desired information from the target group. These parts of the workshops concluded with brief discussions on the relationship between public opinion surveys and elections, with IFES recommending that the departments consider what type of information they would require in the future in order to improve its external relations role.

The actual mechanics of carrying out a survey was the final discussion of each day. Attendees were encouraged to consider which target groups they might need to work with in the future, along with the sample size and survey methods that might be required. Participants made several suggestions for future surveys and survey methods. The facilitator used this time to warn staff of the dangers of selection bias, followed by an in-depth discussion on the matter.

At the close of each workshop, IFES presented several other issues for consideration and possible seminar topics in the months to come. These include: designing survey questionnaires; utilizing surveys conducted by other organizations; carrying out a survey within the IHEC; and, how to identify reputable survey firms.

The workshops were a useful introduction to survey methods for some participants. They were also a welcome refresher course for those who already had background knowledge. While the event was purposely designed to be an informal session, it will serve as a springboard for future activities.

Table 2 presents a summary overview of IFES' workshops during the period. IFES trained a total of 105 participants. Almost 20% of those participants were women. Also provided is data on the number of election officials from the national Office (NO) and those from Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs).

**Table 2: IFES-facilitated workshops, Q1FY12 (1 October - 31 December 2011)**

Date	Location	Title	Total Participants	% of Female Participants	NO/GEO Participant Distribution
15-17 Nov.	Erbil	Ledger 13 Workshop	30 total	17% (5 total)	10/20
22, 24 Nov.	Baghdad	Survey Workshop I and II	34 total	29% (10 total)	34/0
12-15 Dec.	Erbil	BRIDGE Workshop #11	21 total	14% (3 total)	13/8
17-20 Dec.	Erbil	BRIDGE Workshop #12	20 total	10% (2 total)	11/9
<b>Total workshop participants</b>			<b>105 total</b>	<b>19% (20 total)</b>	<b>68/37</b>

#### IV. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Despite a number of outstanding administrative hurdles (including IFES' eviction from its villa, about which USAID was duly notified, as well as its subsequent search for new living accommodations), IFES' programmatic start-up is, for the most part, completed as of the end of this reporting period. A new Chief of Party is slated to come on board in the next quarter, and IFES is also working to finalize recruitment for the External Relations Specialist and the Finance, Grants and Procurement Officer positions.

IFES will work across the entire electoral assistance spectrum in the coming months, working with its IHEC counterparts on strategic planning, voter registration, and anti-fraud procedures. The finalized, formal trainings that will be implemented include:

##### *Administrative and Human Resources Workshop*

The workshop for Administrative and Human Resources will review the Government of Iraq (GoI) proposal for the IHEC staff increase by transferring 6,000 staff from temporary, renewable contracts to full-time civil service employment. It will be a three-day assessment and action workshop to identify the areas that need to be improved in the IHEC Administration and Finance Departments in order to meet this possible increase. It will also identify solutions that can be translated into action plans in the short, intermediate, and long term.

The workshop will be held in Erbil, with tentative dates of 23-27 January 2012, including travel days. Approximately 30 people will attend.

##### *Voting Forensics Workshop*

This workshop will be facilitated for the IHEC Complaints Section. It will be a five-day workshop, which will be repeated for two groups. The workshop will discuss electoral antifraud measures (i.e., training on the forms checking for handwriting and signatures matching), which has been specifically requested by the IHEC. The head of that section is working on the concept paper and a draft agenda. The trainers will be advisors from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI).

The Complaints Section requested that the first workshop be held by the end of January and the beginning of February 2010 in Erbil, with the approximate number of participants estimated at 25 for each workshop.

*BRIDGE Train the Facilitators (TtF) Workshop*

The BRIDGE TtF workshop will take place in February in order to provide BRIDGE training methodologies to the IHEC staff. The international facilitator, Ossama Kamel, who worked previously with IFES Iraq, will conduct the training in the last three weeks of February 2012. IFES advisors are working with the Capacity Building Department to discuss the necessary preparations for the workshop and the required approvals. Twenty five participants will attend the workshop, comprised of staff from GEOs and the National Office (NO).

Beyond these workshops, IFES will also provide critical engagement in the voter registration process in Kurdistan. The IFES IT/Database Management Specialist will be positioned in Erbil for an indefinite period of time in order to provide day-to-day assistance and trainings. His efforts will be supplemented by a local-national database associate, whom IFES is currently recruiting.

IFES will also continue to work with the IHEC staff on the strategic planning process. In January, more extensive preparatory work will be done, with a special focus on completing the IHEC needs-assessment. In the early part of next quarter, IFES will construct the assessment methodology. It will go beyond the self-assessment analysis currently being developed. For example, it will delve into the organizational culture of the IHEC to uncover which processes can be implemented in order to make the institution more effective and less dependent on international assistance. This methodology will rely on several components, such as process mapping, in which senior managers across several departments within the IHEC communicate and agree upon a currently troublesome aspect of internal administration (e.g., payment of invoices in a timely way). The assessment mission will be complete prior to the new BoC taking their seats in the spring. IFES will present its findings to the new BoC, prior to continuing with the strategic planning mission.

Table 3 below provides an overview of the planned upcoming workshops including information on projected dates, location, topic, IHEC audience, projected number of participants and a brief summary of the purpose of the training.

**Table 3: IFES Elections Support Workshops, Q2 FY12 (1 January – 31 March 2012)**

START DATE	END DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	IHEC AUDIENCE	PARTICIPANTS	NOTES
1/21/12	1/23/12	Erbil	Human Resources Workshop	NO and GEO HR unit managers	30	Training workshop to develop the capacity of HR staff in the National Office in the fields of electronic and paper archiving.
1/27/12	2/1/12	Erbil	Kurdistan Election Operations	KREO and NO staff	45	Election operations workshop for Kurdistan regional elections to coordinate resources required from the National Office to assist in election process.
2/19/12	2/29/12	Erbil	BRIDGE - Train the Facilitators (TtF)	GEO and NO management and staff	24	The BRIDGE TtF workshop will provide BRIDGE training methodologies to IHEC staff.
3/4/12	3/14/12	Erbil	Anti-Fraud Workshop	Complaints Section	25	The anti-fraud workshop will discuss handwriting and signatures matching, which has been specifically requested by the IHEC's complaints section.
3/15/2012 (TBC)	3/19/2012 (TBC)	Erbil	IT/Database	IT/Database staff	10	The IT/Database workshop will be an intensive training course on voter registration update software.

## V. QUARTERLY PROJECT BURN RATE

## VI. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS

The first quarter of ESP programming was spent launching the program, while guaranteeing minimal interruption to the ongoing assistance IFES has provided since 2004. IFES was able to continue its daily mentorship as well as continue to implement a number of well-received workshops, both in Erbil and Baghdad.

With regard to the strategic planning process, IFES has found that junior and mid-level staff are enthusiastic about building a comprehensive plan for the next five years of the IHEC's activities. There is widespread buy-in from the rank-and-file personnel and a tangible dedication to an impartial, transparent, and professional election management body. However, one of IFES' concerns is that, with the election of a new BoC, many of the junior and middle-level staff will be replaced with personnel appointed by the new leadership. Doing away with a current staff that retains such impressive institutional knowledge would negatively impact the IHEC as a whole.

IFES is working on a programmatic response in the event that this occurs. Tailor-made briefings and workshops can be immediately conducted for a new staff to bring them up to speed, minimizing disturbance to the Iraqi electoral process. Still, such a development would be time consuming. It would force IFES to significantly adjust its goals in the coming three years.

IFES has also noted, through its own preliminary assessments, that the IT infrastructure at the IHEC is below international standards. While IFES can continue to provide the IHEC's IT personnel with the best technical assistance possible, it is also necessary to encourage the IHEC management to adopt a more proactive role to ensure that equipment is cared for properly. This requires that adequate funding be provided in order to keep systems functioning in an often challenging environment. IFES plans to convey this message in the months to come.

Finally, a gender imbalance continues to exist within the IHEC, particularly at the director level and above. While IFES cannot directly influence the hiring process, advisors have actively encouraged the IHEC to consider increasing the number of women that are employed. Additionally, IFES personnel have met informally, though regularly, with other projects to discuss gender issues and to explore methods for fostering a more gender neutral environment at the IHEC.